A SERMON AT THE FUNERAL OF THE Lady ELIZABETH ALSTON. WIFE of Sir THOMAS ALSTON, Knight and Baronet;

Preached in the Parish-Church of *Woolhill* in *Bedford-shire*, *Septemb.* 10. 1677.

By WILLIAM DILLINGHAM, D.D and Rector there.

Now Published at the Instance of her nearest Relations.

LONDON,
Printed for *Jonathan Robinson*, at the Golde Lion in St. *Pauls Church yard*. 1678.

BIBLIOTHECA·BODLEIANA

TO THE
RIGHT WORSHIPFUL,
Sr. Thomas Alston,
Knight and Baronet,
His much Honoured PATRON;
And to the Memory of his deceased Lady,
W. D.
Dedicateth this, wishing him all
Grace, Peace and Comfort
in this Life,
AND
A Crown of Righteousness
in the Life to come.

Imprimatur.

Novemb. 1, 1677. *C. Alston*, R. P. D. *Hen.* Epiſc. *Lond.* à Sacris Domeſt.

2 Tim. 4. 7, 8.

I have fought a good Fight, I have finiſhed my Courſe, I have kept the Faith. Henceforth is laid up for me a Crown of Righteouſneſs; which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, ſhall give me at that day.

IT is not at all to be doubted, but that the bleſſed Apoſtle St. *Paul*, who (as he reports of himſelf) did *die daily*, and was *in Deaths often*, did live under a conſtant Senſe of his own Mortality. But yet at the time of his writing this Epiſtle, (which was, as the Poſtſcript tells us, when he was brought the ſecond time before *Nero*) he ſeems to have had more than ordinary apprehenſions of his approaching End. Death was now already in his view, and coming towards him. So much he lets us know in the Verſe before the Text: *For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my Departure is at hand.* ἐφέστηκε· not ſo much imminent, as already come.

Now ſeeing that Death is an Enemy which we muſt all encounter; it is all our Concernments to prepare for it. And that we may ſo do, it will be of ſingular

ſingular uſe and advantage to us, to have obſerv'd how St. *Paul*, a good, old, and try'd Souldier of *Jeſus Chriſt*, doth prepare himſelf to receive the Shock, and to cope with this King of Terrours; and to know what Cordials he makes uſe of to ſupport his Heart againſt the Fear of Death approaching.

The Text preſents us with a twofold Meditation of St. *Paul*.

1. A Meditation of what was paſt; a Reflexion upon his former Life well-ſpent. *I have fought a good Fight*, &c. *Ver.* 7.

2. A Meditation on what was future; being a Proſpect into the Life to come, and the Glory of it. *Henceforth*, &c. Ver. 8.

The Apoſtle's Work, and his Reward; his Fidelity, and his Crown. The firſt whereof hath an Order and Subordination to the other. The way to Happineſs is by Holineſs, *without which no man ſhall ever ſee the Lord.* And the way to have aſſurance of Eternal Life is, to get the Teſtimony of a good Conſcience, that we have led our Lives well here on Earth. And this double Aſſurance joyn'd together, did enable St. *Paul* to look upon Death but as a *Departure*, a mild and harmleſs thing; a Departure, and that not from home, but from an Inn, to go unto his Father's Houſe. *The time of my Departure is at hand.*

Man-

Medit. 1. I ſhall begin vvith St. *Paul*'s firſt Meditation, or his Reflexion upon his vvell-led Life. Wherein vve have two things to be conſider'd by us. 1. A Character of the Nature of a Chriſtian Life. 2. The comfortable Teſtimonial which *Paul*'s Conſcience gave him, *viz.* that he had led his Life well. *I have fought a good Fight*, &c.

I. We have here a Character expreſſing and ſetting forth unto us the Nature of a Chriſtian Life; and that under a threefold Metaphor and Alluſion. 1. Of a *Fight*. 2. Of a *Courſe*, or *Race*. 3. Of the *Cuſtody* or *Keeping* of ſomething committed to our Truſt.

1. The Chriſtian Life is here compared to a *Fight*, and figuratively ſo called.

Sometimes the Life of Man is compar'd to a *Warfare*, in reſpect of thoſe many Labours and Difficulties vvhich he is vvont to encounter vvithal. Thus *Job* 7. 1. *Is there not an appointed time to Man upon the Earth?* Where for an *appointed Time*, the Marginal reading is *a Warfare*, by vvhich is meant a Time of Warring. According hereunto vve find, that the *Roman* Legionary Souldiers had a certain Period or Term of Years, ſometimes ten, ſometimes twenty, or more Years, during vvhich they were to continue liſted in the Muſter-Roll, and to fight under their Emperour's Banner: but vvhen that Time vvas once expired, then they were ſaid to be *Emeriti & Exauctorati*, diſcharged of their Oath, and diſmiſſed from

from ſerving any longer, and honourably rewarded with Gifts and Poſſeſſions. To ſuch a Term of Time Alluſion is made, *Iſa.* 40. 2. Where it is ſaid of *Jeruſalem*, that *her Warfare is accompliſh'd.* And ſo *Rev.* 3. 12. *He that overcometh, ſhall go no more out*, that is, to Warfare, he hath his *quietus eſt.*

But if the natural Life of Man be a kind of Warfare, a Chriſtian Life is much more deſervedly to be ſo accounted, a Spiritual Warfare. And thus *Paul* expreſſeth it, 1 *Tim.* 1. 18. *That thou mighteſt war a good Warfare.* And 2 *Tim.* 2. 3. *Endure Hardſhip, as a good Souldier of Jeſus Chriſt.*

There is a double ſort of Fighting, which *Paul* hath Alluſion to, when he ſpeaks of the Chriſtian Life.

Sometimes he ſpeaks of Fighting in a Military ſenſe, as one Enemy fights with another in the Field, which is properly called *Warring.* And of this he ſpeaks in the place but now mentioned; ἵνα στρατεύῃ, *that thou mighteſt war*, τὴν καλὴν στρατείαν, *a good Warfare.*

Otherwhile the Apoſtle ſpeaks of Fighting in an *Agoniſtical* ſenſe, as Men were wont to fight of old in the *Greek Olympicks*, or in the *Roman Cirque* and *Amphitheater*, when they contended for Maſteries, where the Victor's Guerdon was Life and Glory. And unto this *Paul* ſeems to allude in the Text, as the Word ἀγῶνα, here uſed by him, doth import. But I ſhall not be curious to obſerve the Difference, but ſpeak of them promiſcuouſly.

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The Life of a Christian is fitly compared unto a Fight or Warfare; as will appear by the following Considerations.

1. As in War there is always some *Cause* or other contended for; whether it be to revenge Injuries, or to defend Life and Liberty, or to obtain Dominion, or to win Glory and Renown: So is it here; Christians have a Cause which they fight in, the Cause of God, the Cause of Christ, and of their own Souls; they contend for the Glory and Honour of God, for the Name and Faith of Christ, for the eternal Salvation of their own Souls. All these are concern'd in our Christian Warfare; all these doth Satan seek to hinder and destroy.

2. As in Wars and Fights, so here, are two adverse Parties, *Enemies* and Antagonists to one another, fighting and contending with one another. And those we find to be listed under opposite Generals. On the one side, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Life and Salvation: and under him do fight all true Believers. On the other side is Satan, the Prince of the Power of the Air, and of the Kingdom of Darkness, who ruleth and commandeth in the Children of Disobedience; and under him are listed Legions of Apostate Spirits, and wicked Men.

The Devil and the World fight against us by Temptations on the right hand, and on the left, enticing and

alluring us to Sin; terrifying and perſecuting us, to drive us from God and Goodneſs. And with this Hoſt aſſaulting us from without, do combine a Party within us, our mutinous Luſts and Corruptions, the Fleſh luſting againſt the Spirit; without which all Satan's Attempts upon us would be in vain, as we ſee thoſe againſt Jeſus Chriſt were; becauſe, as our Saviour ſaith, *Joh.* 14. 30. *The Prince of this World cometh, and hath nothing in me.* No Corruption to ſide with him, no combuſtible Matter for his Wild-fire to take hold of; ſo that all his Attempts againſt him were in vain. And ſo would they be againſt us alſo, were it not for thoſe Boſom-Traitors which harbour in our Breaſts, thoſe Luſts *which war in our Members.* It is the Tinder within us, that makes Satan's fiery Darts and Temptations ſo dangerous to us.

Theſe our Enemies are repreſented unto us as very formidable and dangerous; and ſo they are, whether we conſider,

1. Their *Number.* They are very numerous, Legions of Devils, and a whole World of wicked Men. But yet if *Beelzebub* commanded only an Army of Flies, though never ſo numerous and ſwarming, the danger were not ſo great. But add to their Number,

2. Their *Power* and Might. They are Angels; and how great the natural Power of one ſingle Angel is, witneſs the Camp of the *Aſſyrians*, 2 *Kin.* 19. 35. where one An-

Angel in one Night made a Carnage of no leſs than an hundred eighty five thouſand Men. Hence it is that Angels are ſaid to *excel in Strength*, Pſal. 103. 20. And although Satan and his Train be fallen from their Happineſs & Holineſs, and extremely debauch'd in their Morals; yet their natural Powers do ſtill continue very great; and therefore they are called *Principalities* and *Powers*, and *ſpiritual Wickedneſs in high Places*, Eph. 6. 12. *In high Places*, ſurely a great Advantage in Wreſtling, and no leſs in Fighting.

But although our Enemies were never ſo numerous, and never ſo ſtrong, yet if they had no Wiſdom to order their Numbers, and to manage their Strength, they might come to Ruin by their own Weight; as we know that great Armies have proved ſometimes unweildy and cumberſom to themſelves, and by frequent Mutinies have in time fretted themſelves to nothing. But,

3. Our Enemies are *ſubtle* Enemies, managing their Force with exceeding great Policy and Cunning, and are wont to prevail more by Sleight than Power.

The Devil is called the *Old Serpent*, (Rev. 12. 9.) A *Serpent*, ſubtle by Nature; but much more by long Uſe and Experience, an *old Serpent*. He hath many Windings and Turnings, many Devices and Stratagems, many Wiles and Methods to circumvent us by.

4. Our Spiritual Enemies are *Cruel* and *Mercileſs*, which makes them ſtill the more dangerous. This adds Will to

their Power, and ſets their Subtlety on work to contrive Miſchief againſt us. In this reſpect Satan is ſaid to have been a *Murderer from the beginning*, John 8. 44. And called a *red Dragon*, Rev. 12. 3. A *roaring Lion, ſeeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. 5. 8.

5. This his Malice to our Souls makes him *watchful* and reſtleſs, exceedingly induſtrious to work us Miſchief, and to bring Diſhonour unto God. We ſee with what indefatigable Induſtry he proſecuted our Saviour Chriſt, by tempting him again and again, by ſlandering and blaſpheming him, by crucifying him, and even after Death, by denying and belying his Reſurrection. He left no Stone unturn'd, that by any means, if it had been poſſible, he might have hindred God's Glory, and Man's Salvation.

Thus we ſee what a dangerous Adverſary we have to fight againſt: *whom reſiſt ſtedfaſt in the Faith; for we are not ignorant of his Devices.* And now 'tis high time to bethink our ſelves wherewith we may oppoſe him, and defend our ſelves.

3. As in other Fightings, ſo in this Chriſtian Combat, we are furniſh'd with *Weapons*, both for the offenſive and defenſive Part, and thoſe both of them tried and approved. 2 *Cor.* 10. 4, 5. *The Weapons of our Warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of ſtrong Holds.* And we have *the whole Armour of God*, which is to be put on by every one of us, that we may

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be able to ſtand againſt the Violence and Wiles of the Devil. The ſeveral Parts whereof we may ſee deſcribed, *Epheſ.* 6. 13, &c. *Truth*, *Righteouſneſs*, and *Faith*, the *Word of God*, and *Prayer*.

Stand therefore upon your watch, having your Loins girt, fight the good Fight of Faith, quit your ſelves like Men: but be ſure you take Chriſt for your General; he is the *Captain of our Salvation*, Heb. 2. 10. He hath baffled the Devil, and overcome the World: therefore be of good Comfort; ἐν τέτῳ νικάσει. *God will give us the Victory through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord*, 1 Cor. 15. 57. The Quarrel is ancient, as old as *Gen.* 3. 15. Our Enemies are formidable; but our Cauſe is good, and God is on our ſide, and ſo long who ſhall be againſt us? who can ſtand againſt him? Not the Gates of Hell, (the Plots and Power of it) nor the Depths of Satan, nor all his whole *Militia* ſhall be able ever to prevail againſt the Church of Chriſt. *Be thou faithful unto Death, and he ſhall give thee a Crown of Life.* For thoſe that conquer ſhall be rewarded; as ſhall be ſhewed anon.

So much briefly of the firſt Metaphor whereby the Life of a Chriſtian is ſet forth unto us: It is a *Fight*, *I have fought a good Fight*. A *good Fight* it is in reſpect of the *Cauſe*, good alſo in reſpect of the *Nature* of the Fight, which is to be managed by well-doing; and good alſo in reſpect of the *Succeſs*, which is Victory and Happineſs. But I haſten to the next Reſemblance of a Chriſtian Life.

2. The

2. The Christian Life is compared to a *Course*, or *Race*, *I have finished my Course*. A *Course of Life* is a Phrase in ordinary use with us at this day; as *Spatium vitæ decurrere*, was with the ancient *Romans*. But it seems in this Place to have been borrowed by the Apostle from the running of a Race used in the *Olympick* Games by the *Grecians*, called δρόμος, the very word here used by St. *Paul*. To this we may observe him often alluding in his Epistles. Heb. 12. 1. *Let us run with Patience the Race that is set before us, laying aside every weight*. And *Phil.* 3. 14. He saith of himself, *I press toward the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus*; where the Expressions of *pressing toward the Mark*, and *for the Prize*, have manifest allusion to the running of a Race.

Now the Race of a Christian is no other than a careful and conscientious and zealous walking in the ways of God, which lead unto Salvation; wherein we shall meet with many hindrances. (1.) *The Sin that so easily besets us*, which is spoken of in *Heb.* 12. 1. Our Corruption within us, which hopples and intangles us, so that we cannot do the things which we would. (2.) Without us we shall meet with many Rubs laid in our way, many Snares, many Scandals, many Stumbling-blocks, laid by *Satan* to intrap us, and make us fall. The World's golden Ball of Pleasure and Profit is cast before us, to entice us out of the way; Satan's wild-fire

of

of Perſecution is flaſh'd in our Faces, to affright us from our Chriſtian Courſe; our way is hedged up with thorns; or elſe carnal Relations and worldly Intereſt hang about our Necks, to pull us back. So that there needs much ſtrength of Grace, much Courage and Reſolution, much Earneſtneſs and Contention, much Labour and preſſing forward, that ſo we may lay hold on the Prize, Eternal Life, the Crown of Glory, which is held forth to us for a Prize, and ſhall be given unto us by the Judg, the βραβευτὴς, and Rewarder, if we ſtrive lawfully, and run well. *So run therefore, that ye may obtain*, 1 Cor. 9. 24.

3. The Chriſtian Life is here ſet forth unto us under the Metaphor of keeping a Truſt; *I have kept the Faith.* Where by *Faith* ſome underſtand Faithfulneſs or Fidelity, that Engagement which is uſually given by Souldiers to their General by an Oath, which is called *Sacramentum militare.* And ſo to *keep the Faith* is to keep the Oath, by fighting faithfully, and not falſly betraying the Cauſe of Chriſt; neither by a treacherous running over to the Enemy, as a *Transfuga partium*; nor yet by a cowardly running away and drawing back from their Colours, deſerting the Cauſe of Chriſt and the Goſpel, which they had ſworn to defend; as all of us have in our Baptiſmal Vow.

But by *Faith* in this place, I think is rather to be underſtood *Fides quæ creditur*, the Truth and Faith of Chriſt in the Goſpel: in which ſenſe the Saints are deſcribed.

(*Rev.*

(*Rev.* 14. 12.) to be such as *keep the Commandments, and the Faith of Jesus.*

The Metaphor of *keeping* this Faith, seems to have been borrowed either from

1. The keeping of a Fort or strong Castle. The Faith and Truth of Christ is a strong Hold, which is committed to the keeping and defending of every Christian Soul; and while we keep this Fortress, that will keep us safe, safe from the power of the Enemy, and we shall be *kept by the power of God through Faith unto Salvation*, 1 Pet. 1. 5. Where the Word φρουρουμένους, signifies properly kept as a Garrison is kept. Or,

2. The keeping of a precious Jewel or Treasure, committed to our charge and custody. The Faith and Truth of Christ is a *Depositum* committed to us, and intrusted with us. To this St. *Jude* seems to allude, (*Jude* 3.) when he exhorts all to *contend earnestly for the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints.* The like Allusion hath St. *Paul*, when he exhorts *Timothy*, 1 Tim. 6. ver. 20, 21. *O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust*: and what that was may appear by the Opposition there subjoyn'd, *Avoiding profane and vain Babblings, and oppositions of Science falsly so called; which some professing, have erred concerning the Faith.* The *Faith* was the *Depositum*, and the *good thing* committed to *Timothy*, as *Paul* phrases it, and exhorts him again to keep, 2 *Tim.* 1. 14. the same which in verse 13. he had expressed in other words, *viz. Hold fast*

the

the Form of ſound Words, which thou haſt heard of me, in Faith and Love which is in Chriſt Jeſus.

If we keep this *Faith* and *Truth*, that will keep our Souls: for by keeping his Faith we truſt in him, and commit our Souls to his keeping, who is the faithful and watchful Lord-Keeper of his *Iſrael*. And therefore St. *Peter* exhorts, *Commit the keeping of your Souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creatour*, 1 Pet. 4. 19. And this did encourage St. *Paul* to ſay, (2 *Tim.* 1. 12.) *I know whom I have truſted, and I am perſwaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him againſt that Day.* And as our Saviour Chriſt did pray to his Father, (*John* 17. 11.) that he would keep all his Elect, *Holy Father, keep through thine own Name, thoſe whom thou haſt given me*: So he promiſes (*Rev.* 3. 10.) to the Church in *Philadelphia*, *Becauſe thou haſt kept the Word of my Patience, I alſo will keep thee from the hour of Temptation.*

3. Or elſe this *keeping* of the Faith may allude unto a Souldier's keeping of his Station, or a Wreſtler keeping of his Ground. But the former are (as I conceive) more proper to the place; and therefore I ſhall purſue this no further, but come to conſider what the thing is which is here meant by *keeping the Faith*. Now to *keep the Faith* is,

1. Truly and firmly to *believe* the Truth of Chriſt, to aſſent unfeignedly to it, to receive it, not into the Ear only, but into the Heart alſo, and there to keep it and cleave unto it.

2. To keep the Truth and Faith of Christ is to *obey* it; as to keep God's Commandments is to *obey* and do them. The Truth and Faith of Christ are kept in an holy Life.

3. To keep the Truth and Faith of Christ is to *hold* it fast by *Profession*. Thus Christ commends the Church of *Pergamus*, Rev. 2. 13. *Thou holdest fast my Name, and hast not denied my Faith*; and likewise the Church in *Philadelphia*, Rev. 3. 8. *Thou hast kept my Word, & hast not denied my Name.*

4. Lastly; The Faith is kept by holding out, and *constant Continuance* and Perseverance in all these, believing, practising and professing it. This is that which receives the promised Reward, *Mat.* 24. 13. *He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.* Rev. 2. 10. *Be thou faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life.* *Paul* must *finish* his Course before he shall receive a Crown. Without this we shall come short of the Prize.

Thus we have briefly surveyed the Character of a Christian Life, which was the first thing observed in St. *Paul's* first Meditation.

II. The second thing propounded to be consider'd is, the comfortable Testimonial which *Paul's* Conscience gave him concerning his past Life and Conversation; he was able to say in the sincerity of his Heart, *I have fought a good Fight*, &c.

St. *Paul* had long since made it his Exercise, his constant Care and Indeavour, to *have always a Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards Men*, Acts 24. 16.

And

And now you see here he reaps the fruit of it.

Accordingly as we use our Consciences, so will they deal by us; if we wound them, they will wound us. If we keep not Peace in our Consciences, how can they speak Peace to us? But if we keep them tender and pure, they will be able to comfort us in our greatest Streights and Difficulties.

St. *Paul* reflecting upon his Life past, his Conscience told him what he here professes of himself.

First, That he had fought a good Fight, in a good Cause, and that he had fought it well, observing therein the Commands of his General; That he had been painful and industrious, couragious and undaunted in the Work and Cause of Christ, not only as a Christian, but also as an Apostle and Minister of the Gospel.

He had encounter'd with *Elymas* at *Paphos*, Acts 13.

With *the Retrivers of Jewish Ceremonies at Antioch*, Act. 15.

With *Stoicks* and *Epicureans* at *Athens*, Acts 17.

With *beast-like Men*, such as *Demetrius* and his Followers, at *Ephesus*, 1 *Cor.* 15. 32.

With *Alexander* the Copper-Smith; with *Hymeneus* and *Philetus*. And in all these *Conflicts* the Gospel still prevailed, and carried the Victory.

And for his Sufferings, the Instances of his Christian Patience, and passive Fortitude, take that Inventary which himself had drawn up sometime before in his second Epistle to the *Corinthians*, chap. 11. v. 23, &c.

Where he hath with great Eloquence described his Adventures to us. *In Labours abundant, in Stripes above measure, in Prisons frequent, in Deaths oft.* V. 24. *Of the Jews five times received I fourty Stripes save one.* 25. *Thrice was I beaten with Rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered Shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the Deep.* 26. *In journeying often, in Perils of Waters, in Perils of Robbers, in Perils by mine own Country-men, in Perils by the Heathen, in Perils in the City, in Perils in the Wilderness, in Perils in the Sea, in Perils among false Brethren.* 27. *In Weariness and Painfulness, in Watchings often, in Hunger and Thirst, in Fastings often, in Cold and Nakedness.* These and such like were the Scars and Marks of Honour, which he had received for the Cause of Christ and the Gospel; for the Truth of which he vouches the God of Truth for witness, *v.* 31. *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I ly not.*

Briefly; his Conscience told him, that he had run his Race well in the ways of God's Commandments, with Zeal, Industry, and (which is the Crown of all) with Constancy. 1 *Cor.* 9. 26. *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the Air.* His Conscience told him that he had kept the Faith committed to his charge; and as *Jesus Christ* had counted him faithful, putting him into the Ministry, 1 *Tim.* 1. 12. So he had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful, 1 *Cor.* 7. 25.

But to wave the Metaphor, I shall shew you plainly these

these two things. 1. What it was that *Paul*'s Conscience did testify. 2. What use he made of that Testimonial.

1. What it was that *Paul*'s Conscience did testify; what was the Answer of a good Conscience to him: which may be reduced unto these two Heads. 1. Faith and Love and other Graces unfeigned. 2. A sincere and constant Indeavour of universal Obedience.

1. By reflecting upon the Actings of his own Soul, he could discern that he did firmly assent and cleave unto the Truth of Christ with all his Heart; that he did rely upon and trust onely unto the Righteousness wrought by JESUS CHRIST for his acceptance with God, the pardon of his Sin, and his right to the heavenly Kingdom; that he had the other true saving Graces wrought in his Heart by the Spirit of God, whereby he was enabled to side with the Law of God in Judgment and Affection, [σύμφημι, συνήδομαι,] to vote with and to delight in the Law of God, and to overbear the Ebullitions and Insurrections of the Flesh, and to mortify it by the Spirit, or renewed Part, and Principle of Spiritual Life that was in him, which is called the *inward Man*, Rom. 7. 22.

These Principles, Habits, and Acts he knew he had; for upon reflexion, he by a rational sense might feel them enabling him and proceeding from him, and so be conscious of them. And that his Faith and Love and other Graces were unfeigned and genuine, he knew by the Light

Light of the Spirit of God ſhining through the written Word upon its own work in his heart, and by its ſpecial Concourſe and Aſſiſtance enabling his gracious Soul to exert and put forth ſuch vigorous and lively Acts as might eaſily be obſerved by a diligent Reflexion.

The holy Spirit of God is called a Spirit of *Wiſdom* and *Revelation*, Eph. 1. 17. A Spirit of *Revelation* in reſpect of the Object, a Spirit of *Wiſdom* in regard of the *Faculty*.

The viſible Object muſt be enlightned, elſe it cannot verge or ſend forth its viſible *ſpecies*, without which it cannot be ſeen; and the Eye muſt be enlightned alſo by an internal Light, elſe it cannot ſee the Object, though never ſo conſpicuous in it ſelf. Thus alſo is it here, the Spirit of God doth diſcover to us the things that are freely given to us of God, the τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, *the things of the Spirit*; not only Truths which it propounds to us from without, but alſo the Graces which it works within us: and thus it may be ſaid to reveal the Object to us. But then it doth alſo inlighten the Eye of the Mind with a ſpiritual Wiſdom, a Spirit of diſcerning, whereby it diſtinguiſhes and diſcerns the Work of Grace to be true and genuine, by the Characters which are given of it in the written Word.

2. St. *Paul* by examining his own Conſcience concerning the diſcharge of his Duty in the whole Courſe of his Life there recorded, could obſerve (in the latter part of it, *viz.* ever ſince his Converſion) a ſincere

and

and constant Purpose and diligent Indeavour of universal Obedience to the Will of God, in pursuance of that resignation of himself, mentioned *Acts* 9. 6. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* His Obedience was *sincere*, though not *sinless*; and *perfect*, though not legally, yet with the allowance of the Evangelical ἐπιείκεια. According to which, *aliquid fieri dicitur, quando quod non fit, ignoscitur*; when Obedience is sincerely indeavoured, and the Failings of it pardoned.

And these Fruits gave Letters credential to his Faith, that it was a living Faith. *Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments*, 1 John 2. 3. And *we know that we have passed from Death to Life, because we love the Brethren.* Love is argumentative to prove that we are in a state of Grace, and the Fruits of Love bear witness unto that, 1 *John* 3. 14.

Paul's Conscience told him, that in his Actions he had not dissembled with God, but that he acted out of a Principle of unfeigned Love to him, and in Conscience of his Command; and that he directed his Actions to God's *glory* as his chief end. Thus much he might be well assured of from the Records of his Conscience, which he had made it his care to keep clear and legible; and though it gave him notice also of his Sins and Failings, yet at the same time it represented them as expiated and cancelled in the Blood of Christ, apprehended by his Faith.

And

And thus you have ſeen what the Teſtimonial was which *Paul*'s Conſcience gave him. Now let us come to ſee,

2. What Uſe St. *Paul* makes of this Teſtimonial. A double Uſe.

1. To aſſure him of a Crown of Righteouſneſs, and by that Aſſurance mediately to comfort him againſt the Fear of Death; of which I ſhall ſpeak afterwards.

2. By this conſideration to comfort himſelf immediately, and next way, againſt the Fear of Death.

The Teſtimony of a good Conſcience, *Conſcientia rectè factorum*, doth arm and ſupport a man againſt the gaſtly aſpect of approaching Death. For,

What is it that makes Death ſo terrible unto Mortals, that the very mention of it makes them tremble like an Aſpine-leaf? The Apoſtle tells us, *The Sting of Death is Sin*, 1 *Cor.* 15. 56. The guilt of Sin upon the Conſcience is that which puts the Heart into ſuch a palpitation: For the Conſcience knowing, that for all thoſe Impieties, whereof it keeps the Regiſter, it muſt come to judgment, and the Books muſt be opened, and every one muſt be judged according to what is found written in the Books, it dreads Judgment to come, (as *Felix* did) and cannot but look upon Death as on the grim Serjeant, that comes to arreſt us, and to ſummon us to judgment. This is the Sting in the Tail of Death.

But now a good Conſcience, ſprinkled with the Blood

of

of Christ, that sincerely reports unto us, that we have by Faith in the Blood of Christ received him for the Pardon of Sin, and gives us in an holy Life in evidence of the Truth of our Faith, doth thereby shew that the Promise of the Gospel, which was made conditionally, is now become absolute unto us; and that therefore we are already passed from Death to Life. And then being once assured that our Debts are pardoned, and the Hand-writing cancelled, we fear no longer Death's Arrest, but may say with this Apostle, *O Death, where is thy Sting? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the Victory through Jesus Christ our Lord*, 1 Cor. 15. 55, 56. Thus we see that the Testimony of a good Conscience, (and nothing else without it) can give us true and solid Comfort, when we come to dy. A *wicked* man may, through the hardness of his Heart, and searedness of his Conscience, be senseless and stupid in his Death, and so fall down like a Log into Hell-flames. An *erroneous* Conscience may make a man brave it out, and (with *Curtius*) leap desperately into the Gulf of the Bottomless Pit. An *Hypocrite's* Conscience may set a fair outside upon it, and dy (possibly) with seeming Joy; but in the midst of Laughter his Heart is sad: his Joy is but like the *risus Sardonius*, when Men seem to dy laughing; but 'tis rather a *Rictus* than a *Risus*, a *grinning of the Teeth* than *Laughter*, and shall end in *gnashing of Teeth* in another World. 'Tis only the Testimony of a good

and pure, ſincere and enlightned Conſcience, that can yield a man good ground of true and ſolid Comfort.

And therefore St. *Paul*, being now (as it were) at Death's door, takes this Cordial before he knocks, hath recourſe unto his own Conſcience for his Letters Teſtimonial, drawn up from a Survey of an holy and well-led Life; and here he finds ſupport. And the like he had done before, 2 *Cor.* 1. 12. *For our rejoycing is this, the Teſtimony of our Conſcience, that in Simplicity, and godly Sincerity* —— *we have had our Converſation in the World.*

This alſo hath been the Practice and Method of other Saints and Servants of God in Scripture; who, when they were under the apprehenſion of their approaching Departure, have fetcht their Comfort from the ſame Topick, which St. *Paul* here made uſe of, *viz.* the *Teſtimony of a good Conſcience* concerning their *paſſed Lives and Converſations.*

Thus good *Hezekiah*, Iſa. 38. 1, *&c.* having received that doleful Meſſage, the *Sentence of Death*, pronounced by the mouth of the Prophet, *Set thine Houſe in order, for thou ſhalt dye, and not live*; whence does he look for his Comfort, but from the ſecret witneſs of his own Soul, teſtifying unto him the Sincerity of his former Courſe, which he is willing to have tryed by the Sunbeams of God's own Knowledg, v. 3. *Remember now, O Lord, I beſeech thee, how I have walked before thee in Truth, and with a perfect Heart, and have done that which is good in thy ſight.*

Thus

Thus *Elijah*, ſitting under the Juniper-tree, 1 *Kin.* 19. 4. could not with any comfort have deſired ſeriouſly, as he did, that God would take away his Life from him, had he not had this aſſurance written on the Table of his own Heart, that he had been very *Zealous*, or *Jealous, for the Lord of Hoſts*, as himſelf profeſſeth v. 10. And how could good old *Simeon* with joy have ſung his *Nunc dimittis*, had he not known in his Conſcience what the Goſpel reports of him, that he was a *juſt and devout Man, waiting for the Conſolation of Iſrael*? Luk. 2. 25.

As ever therefore we deſire to find Comfort in our Death, let us lead holy Lives, and keep good Conſciences, as *Paul*, and theſe other Servants of God did. There are ſcarce any ſo profligate, and given up to all Impiety, but do deſire Comfort when they come to dy. But, alas! by their wicked Lives they have ſtop't the Miniſter's mouth, ſeared the Breaſts of Conſolation, and cut off thoſe Conduit-pipes which ſhould have conveyed Comfort into their Souls. There be many, who will be ready to ſay with *Balaam*, *O let me dy the Death of the Righteous, and let my laſt end be like his*; but they will not live the Life of the Righteous. *Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright; for the end of that Man is peace*. Pſal. 37. 37. But, alas! what Peace can thy Conſcience, or any other, ſpeak to thee, while thy crying Sins and Impieties are ſo many? *Light is ſown for the Righteous, and Joy for the Upright in Heart*, Pſal. 97. 11.

A man may with as much reaſon expect to reap where he hath not ſown, as to reap Joy and Comfort in Death, without ſowing the Seed of it in an holy Life. Sow then in thy Life-time what thou wouldeſt reap when thou comeſt to dy.

And thus I have done with St. *Paul*'s Firſt Meditation, or his Reflexion upon his former Life well-ſpent. I come to the Second.

Medit. 2. St. *Paul*'s ſecond Meditation is a *Proſpect into the Life to come*, and the *Glory of it*, together with *his own Share in it.*

Wherein we have theſe Severals to be taken into our Conſideration.

1. The *Reward* it ſelf, called a *Crown of Righteouſneſs.*
2. The *Certainty* of it, in thoſe words, *laid up for me.*
3. The *Beſtower* of it, *the Lord, the Righteous Judg, ſhall give me.*
4. The *Time*, when it ſhall be beſtowed, *at that day.*

I. The *Reward it ſelf*, which is no other than Eternal Life, the Glory and Joys of Heaven. Which we have here ſet forth unto us under the Metaphor of a *Crown of Righteouſneſs.*

The Joys and Glory of Heaven are called a *Crown.*

1. Becauſe Eternal Life and Bleſſedneſs are promiſed to us under the Notion of an *Heavenly Kingdom*, Luk. 12.32. *Fear not, little Flock; for it is your Father's good pleaſure to give you the Kingdom.* And Chriſt hath made all his

his Members *Kings* and *Prieſts*, Rev. 1. 6. *A Royal Prieſthood*, 1 Pet. 2. 9. And therefore a *Crown* or *Diadem*, which is the Enſign of Majeſty and Royalty, is very aptly uſed to expreſs their future Eſtate by: which is an Alluſion to the Political uſe of the Crown.

2. Eternal Bliſs is called a *Crown*, in alluſion to thoſe *Crowns* or *Garlands*, which were uſed in rewarding ſuch as conquered in the *Olympick* Contentions; which was an *Agoniſtical* Uſe of the *Crown*, to which St. *Paul* ſeems here to have alluded. Thoſe who conquered in Fighting, or overcame in Running, or in Wreſtling, had their ſeveral Crowns beſtowed on them. Now *Paul* had *fought a good Fight*, and had *finiſhed his Courſe*; and therefore his Reward ſhall be a *Crown*: not like theirs, a corruptible Crown of Flowers, or Herbs, which are ſoon wither'd; but στέφανος ἀμαράντινος, *that never fades*, 1 Cor. 9. 25. Which is called by our Saviour, a *Crown of Life*, Rev. 2. 10. And by St. *Peter*, a *Crown of Glory*, 1 Pet. 5. 4. And here by St. *Paul*, *a Crown of Righteouſneſs*; and that not as if it were *merited* by his Righteouſneſs, (as ſome would have it) but,

(1.) Becauſe it is a *Reward of Righteouſneſs*, not of our *deſerving*, but of God's *free giving*. The Crown is given to ſuch, and ſuch only, as are Righteous, though not for the merit of their Righteouſneſs. God rewards and crowns his own Graces in his Children. Godlineſs hath the Promiſes of this Life, and that which is to come.

(2.) Becauſe it is a Crown *due unto the Righteouſneſs*

and

and Merits of Jesus Christ, who hath merited it for us, and hath made us Kings and Priests unto his Father.

(2.) Because it is a Crown which God *in Righteousness* will give unto us, as *merited for us* by Christ Jesus. Hence it is said emphatically here, *which the Lord, the Righteous Judg, shall give me.* Christ shall give it *adjudicando*, by *adjudging it to us*; and his Father *tradendo*, by *delivery*: Christ by Sentence; the Father by actual Execution.

So much be spoken of the first Particular, the *Reward it self*. The second follows, which is

II. The *Certainty* of this Reward, *laid up for me*. Wherein we have a double Certitude expressed, 1. *Objecti, sive Rei*. 2. *Subjecti, sive Spei & Fidei*.

1. Here is a Certitude of the thing it self; the Crown shall certainly and really be bestowed and conferred upon *Paul*, in the issue he shall not miss of it. Thus much is intimated in the word, *laid up*; which implies,

(1.) That it is appointed and set apart for him: and so it was *Destinatione Patris*, by the Father's election; *Merito Filii*, by Christ's purchase; and *Promissione Verbi*, by the word of Promise.

(2.) It is prepared and provided. Hence it is called *a Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the World.* Mat. 25. 34. And our Saviour tells his Disciples, *John* 14. 2, 3. *I go to prepare a place for you.* And surely great must that needs be which *He* prepares, and which hath been so long in preparing.

(3.)

(3.) *Laid up*, implyes, that this Crown is kept safe and preserved: hence said to be *reserved for us in the Heavens*, 1 Pet. 1. 4. whither none can break through to steal it away.

(4.) *Laid up also, out of sight*, to be seen only by the Eye of Faith; *Hope which is laid up for you in Heaven*, Col. 1. 5. Not *seen*, but nevertheless *sure*, because safely laid up; and being discerned by the Eye of Faith, it ministers abundant cause of Joy and Comfort, as may be inferred from 1 Pet. 1. 8.

2. Here St. *Paul* professes a Certitude or Assurance, which he had in his own Soul, that he should receive the Crown: *For me*, for *him* in particular. *David* saith, *Verily there is a Reward for the Righteous*; but *Paul* saith, *for me*, by a particular application to himself.

A true Believer then (it seems) may attain unto an assurance of his own salvation. He may be assured of his present state, that he is passed from Death to Life; and he may be assured also, that he shall persevere, and be *kept by the Power of God through Faith unto Salvation*. And therefore St. *Peter* exhorts to *give all diligence to make your Calling and Election sure*, 2 Pet. 1. 10. Our *Election* by our *Calling*: observe the order. And St. *Paul* speaketh expressly, Rom. 8. 38, 39. *I am perswaded, that neither Death, nor Life,— shall separate us from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* There he declares his assurance of Perseverance; and he speaks for others as well as himself,

sepa-

ſeparate us. And ſo here in the Text, *Not to me only, but unto all them alſo that love his appearing.* And the way to attain unto this aſſurance of Perſeverance and Salvation, St. *Peter* hath ſhewed us, 2 *Pet.* 1. 5, 8, 10. *Add unto Faith Vertue, and to Vertue Knowledg,* &c. (1.) Get true Grace into your hearts, a Principle of ſpiritual Life, and grow in Grace. (2.) Act Grace vigorouſly. *For if theſe things be in you, and abound, they make you that you ſhall neither be barren nor unfruitful: for if ye do theſe things, ye ſhall never fall.* And ſurely they may *know* that they do them. In like manner *St. Paul* argues here, *I have fought a good Fight,* &c. *Henceforth,* λοιπόν. The word in the *Greek* hath the force of an Illative, *therefore, ergo* or *igitur,* (and ſo we may find it tranſlated in *H. Stephan.*) as if *Paul* had here ſaid more expreſly, Hence I conclude and infer; it remains and follows, not only in ſequence of Time, but by conſequence and force of Argument; *relinquitur tanquam emergens è præmiſſis,* it follows from the premiſſes of an holy Life; *There is laid up for me a Crown of Life.*

Where *St. Paul's* way of arguing himſelf into his Aſſurance is very obſervable, and deſerves to be taken notice of, as the beſt and moſt uſual way whereby all Believers may come to be aſſured of their Salvation. And thus he argues:

All thoſe that love Chriſt's appearing, ſhall receive a Crown of Righteouſneſs:

But I am one of thoſe who love Chriſt's appearing:

There-

Therefore I ſhall receive a Crown of Righteouſneſs.

The *Major*, or the firſt of theſe Propoſitions, is expreſs in the end of this 8*th* Verſe, which *Paul* was aſſured of by Faith in the Promiſes, made in general in the Word of God: *Whoſoever believeth, ſhall not dye, but hath everlaſting Life*, &c.

The *Minor*, or ſecond Propoſition, he gives us the Proof of, in that his Profeſſion; *I have fought a good Fight, I have finiſhed my Courſe; I have kept the Faith*; which whoſoever do, do alſo love Chriſt's appearing: And therefore they are put here by *Paul*, as Characteriſtical of the ſame Perſons.

If you will have the Argument in form, take it thus:

All that have fought a good Fight, love Chriſt's appearing:

But I have fought a good Fight:

Therefore I love Chriſt's appearing.

How St. *Paul* came to be aſſured that he had fought a good Fight, I ſhewed before; briefly now; He knew that he believed, that he had *fought*, and *run*, and *kept the Faith*, by *reflecting upon the Operations of his own Soul*; as a Man that thinks, may be aſſured that he thinks, by a kind of rational Senſation, whereby the Soul is conſcious of its own Acts. But that his Faith and other Graces were true and genuine, he might gather from the effects and fruits of them, as here (we ſee) he doth from his Fighting and Running, and from obſerving his own Sincerity in the

anſwer of a good Conſcience and Faith unfeigned; while the Spirit of Grace doth by ſhining upon its own work in his Heart illuminate the Object, and by enlightning the eyes of his Soul enable the Faculty to apprehend and diſcern that Object, that it is indeed the genuine Work of the Spirit in his Soul. And thus the holy Spirit of God, by making us to *know the things that are freely given unto us of God*, 1 Cor. 2. 12. doth *bear witneſs with our Spirits, that we are the Children of God*, Rom. 8. 16.

I will not deny but that this Aſſurance which *Paul* had was a ſpecial Priviledg, not common to all, nor to many true Believers. All true Believers have not Aſſurance; ſome have not yet attained to it, others may have loſt it; yet all muſt endeavour after it, and all may attain to it, ſeeing the Grounds and Arguments whence it may be inferred, are common to all in ſome degree. But they being eminent in St. *Paul*, his Knowledg clearer, his Love ſtronger, his Zeal hotter, his Obedience greater than thoſe of others; hence his Aſſurance was fuller, and few can arrive to his pitch. Yet ſince all true Believers have like kind of Evidence, *in ſuo quiſq; modulo*, according to their ſeveral meaſures, and have the general Promiſes; do believe and endure to the end, and are faithful unto the death; therefore all true Believers may poſſibly attain to be aſſured of their preſent ſtate of Salvation, and that they ſhall perſevere therein, and ſo in the end enter into the Kingdom of Glory, and receive the end of their Hopes, the *Salvation of their Souls*.

No

No danger that this Doctrine of Believers, being assured of their Salvation, should encourage them in the least to indulge themselves to commit Sin, seeing it ariseth and is cherished *ex intuitu*, from the beholding of the actings of Grace in our hearts and lives. Holiness of life is the ground of Assurance; if that once flag, this must needs also fail: for if upon reflexion we find our lives unholy, this cuts the sinews of Assurance by taking away the Argument, by force whereof it is, and without which it cannot be, inferred or concluded. *Extra studium Sanctitatis & usum Mediorum, non potest in actum exire hæc Fidei persuasio*, was the Suffrage of our Divines concerning assurance of Perseverance.

But I am call'd away to consider the other particulars, which yet remain to be spoken to; and I shall do it very briefly.

3. The Bestower of this Reward. *The Lord, the righteous Judge.* By *the Lord* here, is meant the Lord Jesus Christ, as appears by that which is added, *the righteous Judge*; for unto Him hath God the Father committed all Judgment, even to the Son. The Person of CHRIST God-Man, shall execute and actually exercise the Acts of Judging at the last Day. Hence it is said, *Act.* 17. 31. *God hath appointed a Day wherein he will judge the World by the Man* CHRIST JESUS. And Christ himself saith, Mat. 7. 23. *I will profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me.* And Rev. 2. 10. *I will give thee a Crown of Life.*

There is one in the World, who undertakes to dispose of earthly Crowns and Scepters to whomsoever he pleases; yea, and of the Crown of Righteousness too, and the Kingdom of Heaven; wherein yet he falls short of the modesty of him, whose true Vicegerent he is, for *He* pretended no further than to give all the Kingdoms of the Earth, and the glory of them. *Luke* 4. 5, 6. *All this is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it.* But what ever others may pretend unto, The Lord Jesus Christ is the only dispenser of this Crown of Righteousness, the Crown of heavenly Glory. Jesus Christ he is Judge.

Which speaks infinite Comfort unto all true Believers; their Advocate shall be their Judge, and therefore they may promise themselves all lawful favour: But he is a *Righteous Judge*; this affords further comfort, *He is faithful who has promised*; His Promises are *Yea, and Amen.* By his free Promise he hath made himself a debtor; though not so much to us, as to himself, and his own truth. So that it is now but a righteous thing with God to recompence rest unto his persecuted Servants, 2 *Thess.* 1. 7.

4. The last thing to be considered in the words, is the time when this Crown of Righteousness shall be given to *Paul*. *At that day*, viz. *when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels*, as we have it in the place last cited. Which time our Saviour

points

points out by ἐκείνη ἡμέρα, *Mat.*7.22. in *that* day, by way of emphaſis. And ſo St. *Paul* loves to call it, as he doth three ſeveral times in this Epiſtle. Chap. 1. 12. *He is able to keep that which I have committed to him againſt* [*that Day.*] And Verſ. 18. *The Lord grant that he may find mercy at that Day.* The Day of the General Judgment lay uppermoſt in *Paul's* mind, and his thoughts ran much upon it; and no wonder if his eye was always upon his Crown, for that is the time when he ſhall receive this Crown of Righteouſneſs.

It is true indeed, that at the day of Death, when the faithful Soul ſhall return to God that gave it, and be reſigned up into the hands of Jeſus Chriſt, it ſhall be perfected in Holineſs, and enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: but the glory ſhall not be perfect and compleat until ſuch time as the Body, which has been the Souls yoke-fellow and companion in doing and ſuffering for Chriſt here, ſhall be redeemed from the Grave, (for which we are ſaid *to wait*, Rom.8.23. Hence the Souls from under the Altar cry, *how long?* Rev. 6. 10. and hence it is that the Spirit and the Bride ſay, *Come*, Rev. 22. 17. *Come quickly*, v. 20.) Then ſhall the Soul and Body (now again united) be preſented to Jeſus Chriſt at his appearing, and ſo the whole Man ſhall be rewarded, and be for ever with the Lord.

At the day of Death ſhall be a privy Seſſions for every particular Soul; but the general Aſſize ſhall be at *that*

Day,

Day, that great Day of Universal Judgment. The believing Soul at the day of Death shall enter into the Heavenly Kingdom; but the Solemnity of its Coronation shall be deferred till *that day*; then, and not till then, shall its Glory and Happiness be compleated.

And thus much briefly be spoken concerning St. *Paul's* Second Meditation, wherein he expresses his Assurance of a glorious Reward, *a Crown of Righteousness*. Now let us only see what *Use* he makes of this Assurance, and so conclude.

Assurance of Salvation is of use unto Believers, to encourage them to set upon their Duty with zeal and cheerfulness, by inflaming their Love to God, the Principle of their Obedience. Who will not be encouraged to fight couragiously, that is assured of Victory? And the Labourer works cheerfully, when he is once assured that he shall receive his pay when his work is done. And therefore St. *Paul* exhorts, 1 *Cor.* 15.58. *Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

But the Use which St. *Paul* here makes of his Assurance is, to *comfort him against Death approaching*. The Testimony of his Conscience clear'd from the guilt of Sin, did take away the Sting and Fear of Death: but this his Certainty and Assurance of Glory doth make Death, not only not formidable to him, but desirable; when once he could

could ſay, as he did, 2 *Cor.*5.1. *We know that if our earthly Houſe of this Tabernacle were diſſolved, we have a Building of God, an Houſe not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.* It is no wonder if he ſaid, (*Phil.*1.23.) that he had *a deſire to depart, and to be with Chriſt.* And when he had ſaid, 1 *Theſſ.*4.17. *So ſhall we ever be with the Lord*; he might well add in the next verſe, *Wherefore comfort one another with theſe words.* This Conſideration affords Comfort unto all faithful Souls in reſpect of themſelves; ſo alſo to the ſurviving Relations of ſuch, as have with St. *Paul, fought a good Fight*, and *finiſh'd their Courſe*, and *kept the Faith*, inaſmuch as for all ſuch there is *laid up a Crown of Righteouſneſs*, a Crown of Life and Glory, *which the Lord, the Righteous Judg, ſhall give them at that day.*

In which Number we may confidently reckon that vertuous Lady, and precious Servant of Jeſus Chriſt, the Lady *Elizabeth Alſton*, whoſe Funerals we now celebrate. Concerning whom very much might with truth be ſpoken in her commendation; but the ſuddenneſs of the Occaſion, and the time of the Night, will not allow me to ſpeak much; yet ſomething I crave leave to ſpeak of her. Not that ſhe her ſelf, when alive, deſired the praiſes of men; nor that ſhe needs them now, being already in the poſſeſſion of heavenly Glory: but that we by recounting to our ſelves ſome of her Vertues, may become ſenſible of the greatneſs of our own loſs; and ſetting her eminent Graces before our Eyes, may both make

make them the matter of our giving praiſe and glory to God, and alſo the Copy and Example of our Chriſtian Imitation.

She was deſcended of an eminent Family, the *Saint-Johns* of *Woodford* in *Northampton-ſhire*. But ſhe was more highly deſcended than ſo, and better born, being born again, ἄνωθεν, from above (as ſome interpret the word) and ſo, neerly related unto him who is called *the Branch*, or *Day-ſpring from on high*, the Lord of life and glory, the Prince of Peace, and Saviour of us all. By this Line ſhe was a Child of God, and born Heir apparent of the Kingdom of Heaven. For God did even in her tender years ſeaſon her Heart with Grace, and thereby take poſſeſſion of her, beſpeaking her (as it were) betimes, and fitting her for that work, which he afterwards made uſe of her in, *viz.* the ſeaſoning of others with Religion, and the holding forth the power of Godlineſs in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe Generation, among whom ſhe did ſhine as a Light in the World, and did let her Light, *ſo to ſhine before men, as that they might ſee her good Works, and glorify her heavenly Father.*

She was towards her Conjugal Relation, a moſt loving, faithful and dutiful Wife, an Help meet for him.

Towards her Children, a moſt tender and careful Mother, whom ſhe did not ſatisfy her ſelf to have once brought forth, but (as St. *Paul* ſaith he did of his *Galatians*, Gal. 4.19.) ſhe *travailed again of them, that Chriſt might be formed in them.*

She

She was to her Seryants kind and merciful, eſpecially to their Souls. Towards all her Friends true and faithful. Towards all with whom ſhe converſed, exceeding humble and courteous; condeſcending very much towards them of low degree, and eſpecially loving thoſe among them in whom ſhe obſerved but any inclinations to God and Goodneſs.

But remarkable were her Charity and Piety.

Her *Charity*, in ſupplying the wants of the Indigent, not onely with Food and Phyſick for their Bodies, (wherein ſhe expended not a little) but alſo with Phyſick for their Souls, by her wholſom counſel and advice, vvhich ſhe was ready to beſtow on all that needed it.

Her *Piety* towards God was moſt eminent, ſhe being careful to walk cloſely and conſcientiouſly with him; and as he had bleſſed her with good natural Abilities, ſo ſhe was careful to improve them by diligent Reading and Meditation, and thereby having gained a good ſtock of Knowledg, ſhe reduced it to practice, the right end of knowing.

Witneſs her conſtant Cloſet-devotions, and ſeeking God in private; to vvhich ſhe received many gracious Returns, if not in *kind*, yet in *kindneſs*; if not in the particular things which ſhe asked for, yet in ſubmiſſion to God's Will, and in the graces and comforts of his Spirit, as ſhe her ſelf had made the obſervation. Witneſs her conſcientious care that the Duties of Religion might be maintain'd and kept up in her Family. And how diligent

gent ſhe was in her attendance upon the publick Preaching of the Word of God, moſt of you are Witneſſes; and how deſirous ſhe was that all others ſhould do the like. And it is well known to ſome how much ſhe bewail'd the vvithdrawing of others from the publick Ordinance, the means of their Salvation, endeavouring to reclaim them.

This was the conſtant courſe and tenour of her Life, vvhich vvas a living practice of Piety, and a conſtant vvalking vvith God, (as *Enoch's* life vvas): and God took her unto himſelf; her, vvho had lived to him here, to live with him for ever; her, who had walked with him on Earth, to reſt with him for ever in Heaven.

Indeed her departure hence vvas very ſudden, (as it has been of many others lately hereabouts) yet it was more ſudden unto others than to her ſelf. For Death is not ſudden to thoſe who expected it, and provided for it.

That ſhe vvas provided and prepared for Death, I do not in the leaſt queſtion; her holy Life vvas a continual preparation for Death, ſo that ſhe might ſay vvith St. *Paul, I die daily.* Thoſe many Afflictions wherewith God was pleaſed to exerciſe her, frequent ſickneſs, and many bodily infirmities, loſs of Children and other near Relations, had weaned her from the World, and taught her humbly to ſubmit to God's will when ever he ſhould call; but the ſenſe of God's Love in Chriſt to her Soul, had made her more than vvilling to depart, and to be vvith Chriſt.

As

As for her expectation of Death, ſhe had long expected that it would be ſudden, having been often heard to ſay that ſhe ſhould die of an *Apoplexy*, which uſually gives no great warning. But for her expectation of death at that time when it came, I have not heard it was of any long ſtanding, ſhe being on Saturday laſt (the eighth of *September*) about ten in the morning ſurprized with an extraordinary coldneſs in her left hand, which caus'd her haſten up into her Chamber, where within a little time the diſeaſe took her Head, (the fountain of Senſe and Reaſon) and from thence ſliding down into her Heart, (the Citadel of Life) did vvithin the ſpace of two hours put an end unto her days: (*Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord cometh.*) But as ſudden as her end was, ſhe was ſo far aware of it (bleſſed be God) that ſhe vvas able to ſay vvith St. *Paul*, (in the verſe before my Text) *The time of my departure is at hand*; for to that purpoſe did ſhe expreſs her ſelf to one of her Servants, ſaying, *My time is but ſhort, ſhorter than you imagine.* And then in the words of holy *Job*, declar'd her firm truſt in Chriſt, *I know that my Redeemer liveth.* And the laſt words which ſhe was heard to ſpeak were *Jeſus Chriſt*, into vvhoſe hands (as we may well ſuppoſe) ſhe did at that time commend her Spirit. The Lord Jeſus Chriſt, her Saviour, vvhom ſhe had in her heart while ſhe lived, ſhe had in her mouth as ſhe died, and now doubtleſs hath him in her arms, and ſhall be ever with the Lord. Indeed ſhe had expreſſed formerly a deſire that God vvould

pleaſe

pleaſe to give her time to ſpeak to her Friends at parting: This he was not pleaſed to grant her, but the actions of her life, and thoſe many good Counſels vvhich ſhe gave in her life-time are ſtill vocal; and by them, though dead, ſhe ſtill ſpeaketh. And I hope her neareſt Relations, and others alſo, will allow her living Counſel and Example, the force of dying-words, to be continually ſounding in their ears, and always thought upon in their minds, to excite them to the practice of that which ſhe thereby left recommended to them.

But in the eaſineſs of her paſſage God granted, if not prevented her deſires. The *Jews* ſay *Moſes* died *binſhikah*, by a kiſs from the mouth of God, becauſe it is ſaid, *Deut.* 34.5. that he died על־פי יהוה *upon the Mouth of the Lord*, or *according to the Word of the Lord*; and that God drew his Soul out of his Body with a Kiſs. But thus much we are ſure of, that God ſaid unto him, *Deut.* 32.49, 50. *Get thee up, and die in the Mount.* So did he ſeem to ſay unto this *his Servant* alſo, Go up into thy Chamber, and die there: and ſo ſhe did. The Meſſenger of Death took her by the left hand, and led her home unto her Father's Houſe. Where let us leave her to her eternal reſt, and pray earneſtly to God, That as ſhe brought Religion, and a Bleſſing along with her into this Worthy Family, and this Unworthy Place; ſo in anſwer to her many, many Prayers, the Bleſſing and good Preſence of God may be continued to us now ſhe is dead and gone.

FINIS.